

Cyber Cozen

Science-Fiction Newsletter

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to the Editor

I just got the January *CyberCozen*. It's splendid. The reviews were really well written (and perhaps well edited). Good job.

Sid Berger

Sid - Thanks to Raz Greenberg, Guy Eldar, Mordechai Housman, Avi Chami, and me.

Aharon



Review: *Postman* (1998, 178 minutes) reviewed by Steve Davis

I have never been a fan of director/producer/actor *Kevin Costner*. *Dances With Wolves* annoyed me, because the Hero's leg was infected, would become gangrenous, and he should have been dead a 1/2 hour into the film. As for *Waterworld*, it was so filled with flaws, and impossibilities of suspending disbelief, that I sorely wished I were elsewhere. Thus when Grania's mother gave us a copy of *Postman*, I was sorely tempted not to watch. Likewise the previews I saw didn't help.

Still, we brought it with us to Hawaii, and in a very isolated hotel, on a very stormy

night, we put it in the VCR. And, in fact, found myself, against my better judgement, quite enjoying it. I would have liked to better know the nature of the "cataclysm", and might buy the book just to see if it is shown. Maybe it was just a generic cataclysm.

The film was good, with enough wine, that I was able to suspend disbelief. The ending, that things could get better, was, of course, unlikely, and they all would have ended up miserable, and their child would have died of infant diarrhea and dehydration. Still an all, an enjoyable film.

ברכות למוצאי Greeting for Passover!

The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

Meetings (in Hebrew) on *Science and Science Fiction*

Join the Society, go to its meetings! Call 03-528-3803 or 03-604-4959

This Issue of *CyberCozen*:

- A review of Robert A. Heinlein's *Ordeal in Space*. (Hebrew)
- A film review of *Dark City*. (באנגלית)
- Short book reviews by Aharon Sheer. (באנגלית)

בגיליון זה של *CyberCozen*:

- ביקורת לספרו של רוברט היינלין *חוויה בחלל*.
- ביקורת לסרט *עיר אפלה*.
- ביקורות ספרים קצרות מאת אהרון שיר.



Ordeal in Space / by Robert A. Heinlein

ודיון קצר במשמעות ז'אנר המדע-הבדיוני

נכתב ע"י יובל הלר.

right mind let himself be placed where he could fall ... and fall ... and fall.

לאחר התאונה שואף הגיבור להמשיך ולעבוד כאיש חלל אך הוא חש שהוא אינו מסוגל לכך יותר. נפשו שהתענתה בנפילה אין-סופית שבורה, והוא אך צל של האיש שהיה. בלית ברירה הוא מוצא עבודה פקידותית תחת שם בדוי וחי את כל חייו בחלק המקורה של ניו-יורק בתחושה מתמדת של פחד, אכזבה וחוסר תקווה.

רוב עלילת הסיפור נערכת בדירה של חבר לעבודה שהזמין את הגיבור להתארח אצל משפחתו בערב. עם תום הבילוי, בשל השעה המאוחרת, נשאר הגיבור לישון בחדר האורחים של המשפחה. בעומדו ללכת לישון שומע הגיבור יללות רפות של חתול. הגיבור מגלה שהחתול עומד מפוחד וחוסר אונים על פס בולט ברוחב 20 ס"מ בקיר החיצוני של הבניין כמטר מתחת לחלון חדרו. הגיבור נקרא בין שאיפתו להציל את החתול ובין הבעת השולט בנפשו.

עורך האוסף שבו נמצא הסיפור (Damon

JKnight) כותב בהקדמתו לסיפור:

A man's hardest struggles may be those he wages against himself, and the moment of truth for a spaceman may come on a narrow ledge outside a room in greater New-York.

לעיתים קרובות נשלט האדם ע"י פחדיו. את הכבלים החזקים ביותר, המשעבדים אדם ומונעים ממנו לממש את עצמו ולהגשים את חלומותיו, מניח הוא עצמו ע"י כניעה לביעותים, למבוכה, לקיבעון ולפחד מהלא נודע.

אני מאמין, שרגעי האמת של כל אדם באים דווקא במצבים שייראו פשוטים וקלים לאדם זר. במצבים שבהם מתממשים פחדיו האישיים והייחודיים של אותו האדם (ב-1984 שוברת מחלקת החקירות של "משרד האמת" כל אדם ע"י ניתוח פסיכולוגי של אישיותו. הניתוח מגלה מהו הפחד הגדול ביותר של אותו אדם. האדם מופגש עם סיוטו הפרטי ב"חדר 101" ותמיד, לא משנה כמה אמיץ ועז רוח הוא היה עד אז, הנחקר נשבר.) מתגלה רוחו האמיתית של האדם, בשוברו את כבליו ובהפגינו עוז רוח לעבור את דרך החתחתים המבעיתה ולהגשים את רצונותיו.

במהלך הסיפור מצליח הגיבור לצאת מחלון חדרו, ללכת בגובה של מאות מטרים מהאדמה, להציל את החתול ולחזור. בסוף הסיפור אומר הגיבור לחתול:

Little fluff head, how would you like to take a long, long ride with me?

ע"פ ההקשר בסיפור, הגיבור מתכוון בדבריו שהוא מתכנן לחזור אל החלל וכמנהג חלק מהאסטרונוטים לקחת את החתול עמו כחיית מחמד. אני חש שטיסות החלל, האסטרונוט והחתול מהווים מטאפורה בידי היינלין המעונן להעביר את דעתו בקשר לפחדים ולביעותים. תמיד מלווים את החלק ההגיוני של התודעה האנושית חלקים לא רציונליים מלאי חששות וחולשות. חלקים אלו, המסומלים בסיפור ע"י החתול, אינם ניתנים לחיסול. אין אדם יכול להיות חסר-פחד. יחד עם זאת, האדם מסוגל לקחת את הפחדים יחד עמו אל המסע הארוך (החיים), להתגבר עליהם ולממש את עצמו.

סיפור קצר (18 עמודים), נכתב ב-1948 הגרסא שקראתי הייתה באסופת סיפורי מד"ב בשם *Worlds to Come* מ-1967 בעריכת Damon Knight, Fawcett World library.

מאז החלה כתיבת סיפורי מדע בדיוני החל גם העיסוק והדיון במספר סוגיות חשובות הנוגעות לשאלת משמעותו של סיפור המדע הבדיוני ומקומו של הז'אנר בעולם הספרות.

מה מייחד את ז'אנר המדע הבדיוני?

מה גורם לנו לאהוב אותו?

מה מאפיין את סיפורי המד"ב הטובים

באמת?

מה עומד במרכז הסיפור? (העלילה, הדמויות, הרעיון/החידוש המדעי, המסר שהסופר מעוניין להעביר -- או הסיפור שהסופר רוצה לספר?)

ישנם הסוברים שמטרתו של סיפור מדע-בדיוני היא חיזוי העתיד. סופר מדע"ב מגיע לשיא גדולתו בהמצאת לוויין הגאו-סינכרוני (מרתור סי קלארק), בניבוי המצאת הטלפונים הסלולרים (מסע בין כוכבים) או בחיזוי מדויק של חברה טוטליטארית (האקסלי, **עולם חדש מופלא**).

אני רואה בספרות המדע-הבדיוני לא ניסיון לחזות את העתיד, כי אם ניסוי מחשבתי. כדברי סופרת המדע"ב אורסולה לה-גוויין בהקדמתה לספר *The Left Hand of Darkness* בהוצאת "ACE SF":

If you like, you can read [an SF book] as a thought experiment. The purpose of a thought-experiment is not to predict the future (indeed Schrodinger's most famous thought-experiment goes to show that the future on the quantum level can't be predicted.), but to describe reality, the present world. The future in fiction is a metaphor. A metaphor for what?

If I [Le-Guin] could have said it non-metaphorically I would not have written all these words, this novel.

סיפורו הנפלא של היינלין מדגים, לדעתי, בצורה מצוינת את דבריה של לה-גוויין. הסיפור עוסק באסטרונוט שבמהלך שהותו בטיסת חלל נאלץ לצאת מהחללית כדי לתקן קלקול באחת ממערכות החללית. במהלך התיקון מתרחשת תאונה והאסטרונוט (בתוך חליפת החלל שלו ועם אויר ומים לשעות ספורות) ניתק מה"קרקע" (החללית) ונופל אל התהום האין-סופית -- החלל הריק. לאחר 3 שעות של נפילה מתמשכת (שלקראת סופן איבד הגיבור את הכרתו) מצליח צוות הצלה להגיע לאסטרונוט ולהצילו.

מאז סובל הגיבור מבעת (פוביה) מגבהים וממקומות פתוחים.

הרשו לי לצטט את דברי הגיבור בפתיחת הסיפור:

Maybe we should never have ventured out into space. Our race has but two basic, innate fears; noise and the fear of falling. Those terrible heights -- why should any man in his



Film Review: *Dark City* reviewed by Raz Greenberg

Once again, we can't help but wonder about the considerations that guide film distributors here in Israel. In my review of *Gattaca* I wrote that it's a real shame we didn't get to see that film on the big screen. In the case of *Dark City* the big screen question is even more relevant, since seeing it in video is absolutely not the same thing.

The best way to describe *Dark City* would be as *Blade Runner* meets *Total Recall* with *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* looking down from above. The film's hero, John Murdoch (Rufus Sewell), wakes up in a hotel room with no memory of who he is or how he got there. There's a murdered girl in the room with him. Shortly after he wakes up he receives a desperate phone call from a man called Schreber (Kiefer Sutherland) who urges him to leave the hotel. This turns out to be a very good advice, since shortly afterwards Murdoch finds himself chased not only by an ambitious police inspector (William Hurt) but also by a group of bald-headed aliens, who go after him at midnight, when everyone in the city (except him) fell asleep.

Dark City is not a star-driven movie, but the actor gallery in it is very impressive. Swell is very convincing in bringing Murdoch's quest for identity to life, and he deserves extra credit for doing this without the hysteria that usually comes along with such roles. William Hurt is, as expected, excellent as inspector Bumstead. Kiefer Sutherland, perhaps Hollywood's best actor for minor roles, is also

good (though he's trying a little too hard) as doctor Schreber. Fans of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* will be delighted to recognize Richard O'Brien as one of the alien leaders. And Jennifer Connelly (*Labyrinth*, *The Rocketeer*) steals the show as Murdoch's wife, a depressed bar singer.

No matter how well the actors do, the real work on *Dark City* was done behind the scenes. Writer/Director Alex Proyas has worked with dark settings before, in his first film *The Crow*, but here he does a much better job in bringing together science fiction and film noir. He is aided by Cinematographer Darius Wolski (*Crimson Tide*, *A Perfect Murder*), who manages to give the viewer the exact feeling of being in a city caught in eternal night. Music composer Trevor Jones (*Freejack*, *The Last of the Mohicans*) also gets the job done. But the real credit goes to the production designers for the amazing comic book like look of the sets: think of something between *Batman*, *Darkman* and *Dick Tracy*.

Dark City simply works on all levels. Suspenseful, thought provoking and beautiful looking, this film definitely deserves a larger exposure than it will get here in the video stores. The only problem is, the TV screen does no justice to it. If you can see it on DVD or laser Disk, it would be much preferable. Or maybe someone at the Israeli Society of Science Fiction and Fantasy with good taste would arrange a screening of this film at the next cinemateque convention (yes, that was a suggestion).



Short Reviews: by Aharon Sheer

The White Plague by Frank Herbert (1982), 629 pages. Recommended by Dr. Gary Weisinger. Gary says the science in this book is almost completely accurate. Scary! If you read Herbert's book *Dune* and found it boring, as I did, you might like this better. This is actually a book about Ireland, and pretty convincing. The anti-hero of the book is a molecular biologist who watches his wife and two children blown up by a terrorist attack in Dublin, Ireland. As a result he goes insane, deciding to take revenge on three peoples: the Irish, whose terrorists randomly kill innocent people, the British, whose cruel domination of Ireland for hundreds of years made the Irish even worse than they already were, and the Libyans who trained the Irish terrorists. Calling himself "The Madman", he develops a sex-linked genetically based plague which is capable of killing all women of Irish, British and North African descent. The plague loves antibiotics and especially thrives when they are used. It is invariably fatal, and there is no known cure. Imagine Ireland without women, Britain without women, much of the U.S. without women, much of Europe without women, North Africa without women. How can you stop this plague from spreading? The Irish respond to this horrible disaster much as we expect: their men kill each other. Much of the book takes place in Ireland, and it successfully introduces us to the horrible Irish. What an awful people they are! They really deserve to have their women killed. However we have somewhat more

sympathy for the rest of the world, as the plague mutates and spreads. Even Israel is threatened. The world's reaction to this disaster is described. The remarkable thing about this book is that it is not depressing. The indomitable spirit of man, etc. But the terror of the book is in the basic idea: that one man, angry about a terrible personal tragedy, could single-handedly develop a plague and single-handedly spread it all over the world. My first reaction was, of course, that I can think of a few peoples I'd like to wipe out - - provided that I can prevent the plague from spreading to their more friendly neighbors. The author is telling us that we must continue genetic research otherwise we will not be able to defend ourselves against such a madman, who may appear at any time. He's right.

Illegal Alien by Robert J. Sawyer (1997), 301 pages. Robert J. Sawyer writes sf best sellers. He got the Nebula award for his novel **The Terminal Experiment** in 1995. His novel **Frameshift** was one of the nominees for the Hugo Award for Best Novel of 1997. He is also the only big-name Canadian sf writer. This book has been strongly influenced by the lectures and books of biologist/sf fan *Jack Cohen*. (See *The Collapse of Chaos*, by *Jack Cohen* and *Ian Stewart*, for example.) *Cohen's* ideas about evolution, and especially the possible evolution of aliens, is a major aspect of the book. The author has invented a likable group of aliens, and given information about their biology and evolution in a very plot-centered way. This is not description of alien biology for the sake of description, as some authors would do. Here the differences in biology are central to the plot and make quite exciting reading. "We came in friendship", says one of the aliens. If so, why did he kill an earthman, cutting his leg off and letting him bleed to death? Or did he? What results is an O. J. Simpson-like Los Angeles trial, with an Attorney General who wants to be governor of California trying to show that he's not soft on aliens. The trial, and its display of U.S. style justice, gives the Canadian author a chance to make some fun of the U.S. I found the book quite exciting, but the ending was not one I would like to be sympathetic with. Talk about being paranoid about visitors from other stars! It would be interesting to see if this book would be enjoyed by someone who is not currently a sf fan, but just likes a good contemporary read.

Night Lamp by Jack Vance (1996), 380 pages. Jack Vance is one of my favorite authors. Some of his books are genuine sf, exploring alternative social systems in a fascinating and detailed way. One such is *To Live Forever* (1956) which deals with a society in which immortality is a reward for great success in your profession (reviewed in *CyberCozen* in February 1996). In another, (whose name I have forgotten), he describes a Histadrut-like society in which excellence is frowned upon as an attempt to be superior; what's important is "equality", that is, everyone must be pretty much the same. In that Histadrut-like society, people survive by making forays into the territories of their more capitalistic neighbors, and stealing from them. Many of his other books, however, are planetary adventures, quests, in which some young person who has been wronged travels in alien places and looks for those who have wronged him. These books too often describe interesting alternate social systems, but these systems are often more part of the landscape than an integral part of the story. *Night Lamp* is mostly in the second category. It is a fascinating tale of a young man and his parents who have been dreadfully wronged, but his memory of this has been wiped out. As a child he suffers nightmares from wisps of memory, and is convinced that he must go out to space to discover the source. His loving, adoptive parents object, and have him treated by skilled therapists. Eventually, however, the quest must begin. Here too is a description of a special society, on a planet circling the sun Night Lamp, at the galactic rim, so far from civilized control that the planet's settlers were able, thousands of years before, to do genetic experiments on human DNA and produce a race of perfect servants. These servants are not born, they are grown, and serve the descendants of their creators, so that the creators can devote themselves to art and music and philosophy, and have long ago forgotten how the servants are created. Fascinating.

For Comments: POB 9443, Tel Aviv 61093. Email: asheer@netvision.net.il. Tel: Aharon Sheer 08-947-1225.

Editor: **Aharon Sheer**.

Graphic Editor and Design: **Guy Eldar**.

Logo by: **Miriam Ben-Loulu**.

For mail delivery of *CyberCozen*, please donate 30 shekels per YEAR; For airmail to US \$15; If Aharon Sheer can hand-deliver it, 15 shekels.

עורך: אהרון שיר.
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עבור משלוח בדואר של *CyberCozen*, הנכם מתבקשים לתרום 30 ש"ח לשנה; עבור דואר אוויר לרה"ב \$15; אם אהרון שיר יכול למסור את העיתון באופן אישי, 15 ש"ח.

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